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Besides other evils, two extremes disfigure our modern music; firstly, it is too heavy and unmelodious. Beethoven, in his latter days, became deaf, melancholy, suspicious, and misanthropic; and his works, as naturally ensues, are influenced by his gloomy imagination and his disturbed equanimity of mind: now, as these identical works have been, and are extolled by critics, as the most excellent and profound creations of his gigantic spirit, poor imitators fancy that their works will resemble those of Beethoven, if they, like him, become melancholy, or, at any rate, compile melancholy, gloomy, and inexplicable works. This feeling has prevailed so long that the best of the moderns do not *dare* to raise a cheerful strain, or publish a simply-constructed, naturally flowing, and generally intelligible melody, because they fear that critics will denounce them as unscientific and frivolous.

"Life is serious, let Art be gay." Many of our modern German composers seem to have forgotten that Art must procure *enjoyment* for mankind; and we may unfortunately class among novel *inventions*, the use of music as a means of filling the soul with dark and dismal dreams, and of oppressing the mind with Alp-like heaviness. Agreeable melody is contemned, and therefore many modern symphonies contain not one single melodious phrase, to which the sensations of a listener's breast may respond.

Besides agreeable melody, some moderns condemn unsophisticated human feelings, such as peace, pathetic emotion, &c., and throw themselves exclusively into a frenzy of the wildest passions, which ought to be seldom displayed, and then, merely as a means of contrast.

In the meanwhile, the public enjoys surreptitiously, so to speak, that which it really loves. It is to be hoped, that a prediction, which I have somewhere read, will soon be verified: "At length, however, the million must discover that, with the exception, perhaps, of some popular dance-tunes, the music written for its entertainment consists of nothing but a thick fog of tones."

As every extreme calls forth its opposite, so, many of our modern musicians are too inconsiderate and frivolous; this is mostly evinced in pianoforte music, under the shape of countless "pot-pourris" from new Italian and French airs; but all these concoctions are greedily bought, which clearly proves that lovers of music yearn after melody.

Up to Beethoven's epoch, the language of sound became more and more distinct, more defined, and, therefore, more generally intelligible. But Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, knew clearly what they wished to say, and rested not until they found for their thoughts the aptest and most intelligible expressions. Many of the moderns do not really know what they would say or express in their compositions; they are not thoroughly conscious of their aim, and therefore clutch, at hazard, among musical phrases. Can we then

wonder, that the Public cannot tell what such works signify,—that it hears them without enthusiasm, or even prefers not to hear them at all? When originally-powerful and heart-stirring ideas fail, it is the fashion to be striking by force of blows, on cymbals, drums, and kettle-drums, and to impress the ear, if not the heart. If some of our composers had no brass at their command, sadly would their music be wanting in effect.

Another evil is the mania for *originality*, which causes writers, deficient in all which constitutes *true originality*, to substitute for it unnatural, harsh modulations, violent and unconnected phrases, unheard-of harmonic combinations, and an utter disregard of all rule. But a noble idea makes the deepest impression in a natural form; only worthless ideas need decking out, *to look like something*.

Evils, again, are the desire of being in print as soon as possible, which furnishes the world with much unripe stuff;—and the ease with which transitory fame may be obtained by the hot-house process of newspaper puffery and party-spirit adulation.

I will continue this subject in a future letter. For the present, adieu.

MUSIC

AMONG THE POETS AND POETICAL WRITERS.

By MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

(Continued from page 170.)

THE poets' allusions to the owl, combine *picture* with *sound*. What a vivid image, for instance, is presented to us of the bird's round staring eyes as well as his querulous voice, in the passage where Titania alludes to his witnessing her and her fairy elves' nocturnal gambols; when she bids some of her train

"keep back

The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and *wonders*
At our quaint spirits."—*Shakespeare*.

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"Then let the winds howl on! ' Their harmony  
Shall henceforth be my music, and the night  
The sound shall temper with the owlets' cry,  
As I now hear them, in the fading light  
Dim o'er the bird of darkness' native site,  
Answering each other on the Palatine,  
With their large eyes, all glistening gray and bright,  
And sailing pinions."—*Byron*.

"the soliloquy of the hermit owl,  
Exhaling all his solitary soul,  
The dim though large-eyed winged anchorite,  
Who peals his dreary pæan o'er the night." *Byron*.

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"from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign."—*Gray*.

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"The owlet, in the moonlight air,  
Shouts, from nobody knows where;  
He lengthens out his lonely shout,  
Halloo! halloo! a long halloo!"—*Wordsworth*.

The bird of morning—like the bird of night—is pictorially as well as musically described. With what graphic stateliness is ushered in

"a cock hight\* Chanticleer;  
In all the land of crowing n'as† his peer:  
His voice was merrier than the merry orgon  
On massè days that in the churches gone:  
Well sikerer‡ was his crowing in his lodge  
Than is a clock or any abbey orloge:§  
By nature he knew eachè ascension  
Of th' equinoctial in thilké town,  
For when degrees fifteen were ascended,  
Then crew he that it might not be amended.  
His comb was redder than the fine coràl,  
Embattellèd as it were a castle wall;  
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone,  
Like azure were his leggès and his tone,||  
His nailès whiter than the lily flower,  
And like the burnèd gold was his colour."

*Chaucer.*

"And cheerful Chanticleer with his noté shrill  
Had warnèd once, that Phœbus fiery car  
In haste was climbing up the eastern hill,  
Full envious that night so long his room did fill."

*Spenser.*

"The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat  
Awake the god of day."—*Shakespeare.*

"the crested cock whose clarion sounds  
The silent hours."—*Milton.*

"While the cock, with lively din,  
Scatters the rear of darkness thin."—*Milton.*

"Sweetly ferocious, round his native walks,  
Pride of his sister-wives, the monarch stalks;  
Spur-clad his nervous feet, and firm his tread;  
A crest of purple tops the warrior's head.  
Bright sparks his black and rolling eye-ball hurls  
Afar, his tail he closes and unfurls;  
On tiptoe reared, he strains his clarion throat,  
Threatened by faintly-answering farms remote:  
Again with his shrill voice the mountain rings,  
While, flapped with conscious pride, resound his wings!"

*Wordsworth.*

The bird of home—sometimes called "God's own bird"—and dear to every heart, for the sake of its gentle office to the deserted "Babes in the wood" recorded in the old ballad

("No burial this pretty pair  
Of any man receives,  
Till Robin-redbreast painfully  
Did cover them with leaves")—

has had its modest music celebrated by poetical writers.

"The redbreast warbles still, but is content  
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed,  
Pleased with his solitude, and fitting light  
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes  
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,  
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.  
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,  
Charms more than silence."—*Cowper.*

"Sweet breeze! thou only, if I guess aright,  
Liftest the feathers of the robin's breast,  
That swells its little breast, so full of song,  
Singing above me, on the mountain-ash."

*Coleridge.*

\* Hight—called. † N'as—was not. ‡ Sikerer—more certain.  
§ Orloge, horologe—clock. || Tone—toes.

"And redbreasts warble when sweet sounds are rare."  
*Wordsworth.*

"Snatches of music taken up and dropt  
Like those self-solacing, those under-notes  
Trilled by the redbreast, when autumnal leaves  
Are thin upon the bough."—*Wordsworth.*

"Driven in by Autumn's sharpening air,  
From half-stripped woods and pastures bare,  
Brisk Robin seeks a kindlier home:  
Not like a beggar is he come,  
But enters as a looked-for guest,  
Confiding in his ruddy breast,  
As if it were a natural shield  
Charged with a blazon on the field,  
Due to that good and pious deed  
Of which we in the ballad read.  
But pensive fancies putting by,  
And wild-wood sorrows, speedily  
He plays the expert ventriloquist;  
And, caught by glimpses now—now missed,  
Puzzles the listener with a doubt  
If the soft voice he throws about  
Comes from within doors or without!  
Was ever such a sweet confusion,  
Sustained by delicate illusion?  
He's at your elbow—to your feeling  
The notes are from the floor or ceiling;  
And there's a riddle to be guessed,  
'Till you have marked his heaving chest,  
And busy throat, whose sink and swell  
Betray the Elf that loves to dwell  
In Robin's bosom, as a chosen cell.  
Heart-pleased we smile upon the bird  
If seen, and with like pleasure stirred  
Commend him, when he's only heard.  
But small and fugitive our gain  
Compared with his who long hath lain  
With languid limbs and patient head,  
Reposing on a lone sick-bed;  
Where now he daily hears a strain  
That cheats him of too busy cares,  
Eases his pain, and helps his prayers."

*Wordsworth.*

"Winter is ycomen in,  
With stormie sadde cheere;  
In the paddocke,  
Whistle ruddocke,  
Brichte sparke in th' dedde yeare."

*Charles Cowden Clarke.*

The two following passages are not strictly musical; but they too characteristically depict the bird in question, not to come with glad acceptance here:—

"the ruddock would,  
With charitable bill (O bill, sore-shaming  
Those rich-left heirs, that let their fathers lie  
Without a monument!), bring thee all this;  
Yea, and furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none,  
To winter-ground thy corse."—*Shakespeare.*

"The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,  
Wisely regardful of th' embroiling sky,  
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves  
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man  
His annual visit. Half afraid, he first  
Against the window beats; then brisk, alights  
On the warm hearth; then hopping o'er the floor,  
Eyes all the smiling family askance,  
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is!  
Till, more familiar grown, the table-crumbs  
Attract his slender feet."—*Thomson.*